For an improved home

Appliances should be energy efficient

How energy efficient is that automobile in the window? Does it get 20 miles to the gallon? 30? 40? To most potential buyers, the answer is as important as the car's pricetag.

But what about the refrigerator-freezer you're considering? Or dishwasher? Or air conditioner? A labeling requirement now gives consumers an opportunity to also gauge the energy efficiency of most major home appliances manufactured since 1980.

All refrigerators, refrigerator-freezers, dishwashers, room air conditioners, clothes washers, water heaters and furnaces are required to wear labels that will enable the shopper to compare its energy efficiency with other models. In addition kitchen ranges and ovens (including microwave ovens), clothes dryers, television sets, home heating equipment other than central furnaces, and humidifiers and dehumidifiers are subject to standardized efficiency testing procedures, but are not required to carry labels.

"Saving energy in the home should be an important consideration for someone planning to buy a home appliance," said Ann Maynard, spokesperson for Edison Electric Institute's National Energy Watch, an energy efficiency program. "There is no reason why consumers should be any less concerned about the energy efficiency of, say, a refrigerator or dishwasher, than they would a car."

There are four types of Energyguide labels. For appliances that do not consume hot water, such as refrigerators, freezers, and water heaters, the label presents and estimated annual operating cost in dollars. For those appliances that do consume hot water, specifically dishwashers and clothes washers, the labels show two dollar amounts: cost for the applicance when its hot water is supplied from an electric water heater and cost the hot water is supplied from a gas water heater. The third type of labels is for room air conditioners, where the numbers relate to its Energy Efficiency Ration (EER).

The fourth type is for furnaces, which is generic in nature and points out the availability of an energy fact sheet for the particular unit.

Refrigerator-Freezers

At the center of the label in bold type is the estimated operating cost of the appliances for one year, based on a national average electric rate of 4.97 cents per kilowatt hour. This number is flanked by the cost of models of the same type and size range at the highest and lowest ends of the energy efficiency spectrum. The estimated annual costs are also indicated with variations in the kilowatt hour cost on a chart below.

Dishwashers

Federal regulations require that labels for dishwashers carry cost estimates for both electric water heating and gas water heating. Included in the equation are frequency - eight loads of dishes per week - and cost - 4.97 cents per kilowatt hour for electric and 36.7 cents per therm for gas. Charts are offered below for estimated operating costs at different energy costs and load frequencies. Again a range of estimated costs from the most efficient to the least efficient machine is shown on a bar scale.

Clothes Washers

To evaluate the operating cost there, it is important to know the washer's "capacity range." In order to compare the performance of similar machines, the consumer must be certain they are in the same capacity range. Automatic clothes washers have two capacity classifications: compact for less than 1.6 cubic feet tub capacity; standard for 1.6 cubic feet or more of tub capacity.

Water Heaters

The capacity of a water heater is given in terms of "first hour ratings," which is the amount of hot water that can be produced during the first hour of operation. Estimates are based on a national average oil rate of 62 cents per gallon, with yearly estimates for per gallon costs of 52 cents to 72 cents charted underneath.

Room Air Conditioners

The large number on this label is an Energy Efficiency Rating (EER) ration, not a dollar amount. The higher the number, the more efficient the air conditioner. The EER is the ratio of the cooling capacity of the unit (expressed in Btu/hour) to the amount of electric power drawn by the unit (expressed in watts). The range of EERs for other room air conditioners of approximately the same cooling capacity are included on the label, as is an operating cost chart which calculates the cost of using the appliance based on local electricity rates and hours of use.

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Use care in planning for home improvements

Careful planning may be the most important step leading to the success of an intended home improvement project.

Your present home represents a big investment--perhaps the largest of your lifetime. Home improvements not only protect that investment, they can minimize maintenance, provide more functional living space, even help cut rising energy costs. But, they've got to be done right!

The National Home Improvement Council (NHIC) suggests that you consider your needs realistically before starting any project. Decide what repairs are imperative and what im-

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Natural gas is efficient way to produce hot water

Natural gas hot water heating is the fastest, most economical and efficient choice according to the American Gas Association.

But to combat today's rising energy costs, the gas appliance industry has developed water heaters that are more efficient than ever.

The average family of four uses about 26,000 gallons of hot water a year. It takes a lot of energy to heat that much water. And a lot of money.

The new gas water heaters that are now available have features to hold down both energy use and utility bills. Improved design features - such as double thick- insulation, energy-saving burners and more efficient heat transfer - allow the new gas hot water appliances to heat the same amount of water with nearly one fourth less gas than previous models. This can save consumers some $220 in operating costs over a 10-year period.

That's especially good news for consumers who are concerned with saving energy and money. And with maintaining high quality operation.

Gas water heaters can deliver the right amount of hot water at the right time. Few appliances are called upon to perform so frequently and without any real maintenance requirements.

To get the maximum efficiency from your gas water heater:

* Drain a pail or two of water from the faucet located at the bottom of the heater several times a year.
* Keep your water set at "normal" - the most efficient setting. This sets the water temperature at 140 degrees F. If greater than normal usage is anticipated, set the dial at "hot", but remember to reset it afterwards.
* A draft or dust accumulation can cause the pilot light to go out. Follow the appliance instructions and relight it. If any difficulty occurs, however, turn the controls off and call a plumber or heating dealer.
* Change living habits just a little to help improve the water heater's efficiency and sit back and watch the big results. By taking shorter and/or not-quite-so-hot showers, gas savings can be increased.

Improvements can enhance summer

Make summer special. Don't let it slip by unnoticed. Outdoor meals, evening entertainment and even your lazy days are more pleasant when you enjoy them in the comfortable beauty of your own back yard. A redwood gazebo or garden room will get you and your guests out of the house to rediscover summer, the way it should be. Even a simple redwood shade trellis will help make the best season of the year even better. If you think all this is beyond your means or skill, think again! Creating a redwood retreat for your back yard is more affordable and easier than you'd imagine. In addition, it will save air cooling costs and add value to your house.

In California, where outdoor living is a time honored tradition, homeowners and professional builders agree redwood provides the beauty, performance that garden projects look best and last longer. Redwood and outdoor living go hand in hand because redwood offers the best value for decks, fences and other garden structures. You can save money by using the economical redwood garden grades which have a rustic, knotty appearance.

Posts, beams and rafters for garden rooms and gazebos are all highly visible, so it is important to choose a wood that is both attractive and able to stand up to years of weathering. Redwood has a natural stability not found in other woods. It resists splitting, checking, cupping and warping.

Whether you plan to build a garden retreat yourself or hire a pro to help you, you can get redwood quality and the best value dollar for dollar by choosing the most economical redwood grade that will do the job right. Here's a brief description of the redwood grades readily available.

Construction Heart is an excellent choice for posts and deck understructures or other applications where you need strength on or close to the ground. It is a strong all-heartwood grade with decay and insect resistance.

Construction Common is useful for beams, rafters, decking and benches. It can be used almost anywhere decay and insects aren't a problem.

Merchantable Heart is well suited to non-load bearing applications like planters, fences and especially uses on or close to the ground. It is a highly useful, economy grade with the durability of redwood heartwood.

Merchantable can be used above ground for trellis work and privacy screens. It contains lighter colored sapwood and knots slightly larger than the construction grades.

Roof improvements are necessity, not luxury

Deciding to replace the roof on your home isn't a luxury. It's a necessity. Harsh weather, over time, makes shingles dry out, crack, curl or blow away. Needless to say, a shabby roof detracts from your home's appearance.

The prospect of reroofing isn't as forbidding as it may seem. In fact, a wise choice of roofing material can give your home a new and exciting appearance.

As the largest exterior expanse of your home, the roof should be viewed as an investment rather than an expense. Today's three-dimensional asphalt shingles, for example, come in a variety of attractive colors and are manufactured to last for many years with only minimal maintenance. Since asphalt shingles can often be applied over the old roof, the cost of a tear-off may be eliminated.

Since it contributes so much to the exterior appearance of your home, the esthetic value of the new roof ought to be considered. Chances are when your old roof was applied, your choice of shingles was limited. Modern asphalt shingles offer variety.

New multi-layered asphalt shingles create depth with bold, attractive shadow lines. Available in popular earthtone shades, these shingles serve to blend a home with its surroundings.

Transform plain rooms into interior decorators' dreams

There are a number of ways to enhance the beauty of a room. Wall paper, draperies and furniture can transform the plainest room into a decorator's dream. Another way to increase the inside beauty of a room is from the outside-with a wood deck.

Whether for a family room, living room, kitchen, bedroom, or bath, a wood deck can complement your home's exterior design while enhancing its interior space.

For Outdoor Entertaining

If your family is big on backyard barbecues or entertaining guests outdoors, build a deck to accommodate them. An expansive wood deck makes outdoor activities a pleasure.

If there are sliding doors in the dining room, an assortment of potted plants around the new deck will serve as a visual extension of the dining room to give indoor dining a brighter outlook.

Bedroom Sundeck

Building a wood deck, fenced in for privacy, outside a bedroom will add a great place for sunning, reading or just relaxing. For easy access, install sliding doors.

Special Sites

If the site is unusual or the plan complicated, the Western Wood Products Association suggests contacting a landscape architect or builder. With proper installation and drainage, a deck of western wood will last for many yeras and require minimal upkeep. Western wood can be painted, stained or left to weather naturally. Various species are available at local lumber dealers or building supply stores.

BEFORE: The home of Jan and Kevin Collins, as shown when the project to renovate the structure was first getting underway. The house was stripped inside and completely renovated inside and out.

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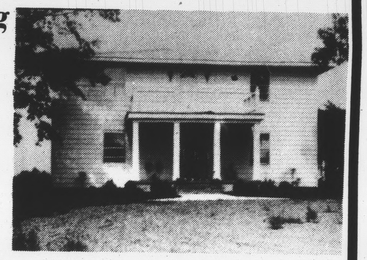

AFTER: With the help of Farmer's Bank, the Collinses have a beautiful home, designed to their exact specifications. Farmers National Bank would like to help you with your home improvements, too!

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